(c) whether Air Turbine Fuel is more expensive here as 80 per cent excise tax coupled with state sales tax ranging from 4 per cent to 9 per cent is imposed on it and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government propose to look into the matter and bring parity in fares with airlines of other countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a), (b) and (d) Government does not regulate the air fares and airlines are free to determine the same in accordance with their commercial judgement and market forces.

(c) The prices of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) before sales tax in India is higher by 25 to 35% compared to the average international prices. The taxation structure on ATF uplifted for domestic operation is 8% excise duty plus Sales Tax levied by State Governments ranging from 4% to 36%, average rate being 25% at present.

Swagat Seva at International Airports

438. SHRI DATTA MEGHE:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the customer-friendly "Swagat Seva" service which would provide hassle-free transit to passengers at international airports;

(b) whether such a service is also available in other countries, and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a payment-based service and if so, the cost thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) 'Swagat Seva' planned by Airport Authority of India (AAI) at Indian airports shall render services for providing assistance to passengers in clearing airport formalities, escorting to the check-in and immigration counters, porterage services to the unaccompanied minors, elderly, sick and physically challenged passengers; hiring a car, taxi, hotel booking, arranging tickets, transportation from aircraft to the terminal building; catering services, arranging conference room, services of business center and reservations and purchase of tickets etc.

(b) A specialized passenger handling services is in operation at international airports abroad. At Dubai International Airport, such service has been launched in the name of 'MARHABA-WELCOME' to offer friendly and efficient service at all stages of the Meet & Greet process.

(c) An agency selected for rendering such services at Indian Airports is supposed to charge Rs. 500.00 per passenger out of which royalty charges of 11% of Gross Turn Over is payable to Airports Authority of India.

International Airport at Nagpur

439. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 24 and Unstarred Question 239 given in the Rajya Sabha on 6th July and 13th July, 2004 respectively and state:

(a) what is the present status of the proposal to develop a multi-nodal international hub airport for passenger and cargo at Nagpur;

(b) the broad features of the contemplated international airport;

(c) whether the area around is to be developed into a Special Economic Zone to boost up exports as a part of the plan; and

(d) the progress made so far and what is the time-frame for completion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The State Government of Maharashtra had submitted a proposal to develop Nagpur Airport as a Multi-Nodal International Hub Airport for Passenger and Cargo. On the advice of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of Maharashtra conducted a due diligence of Airport infrastructure at Nagpur and submitted a report on 26.10.2004. The report is under examination.

(c) and (d) A fresh proposal from the Maharashtra Airport Development Company Limited for setting up of a Special Economic Zone around Nagpur airport through the State Government is awaited in the Ministry of Commerce.

Facilities for Haj Pilgrims

440. SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only Air India and Saudi Airlines are being used for carrying Haj pilgrims at present;

(b) whether it is also a fact that there are complaints against Saudi Airlines for not providing proper services to the Haj pilgrims;